

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

House okays funds for pro-abortion groups

After a heated debate on June 12, the House of Representatives voted 222-200 to overturn U.S. support for the so-called Mexico City policy, which restricted the United States from giving any family planning assistance to international organizations which participate in performing or promoting abortion as a method of birth control. The Foreign Assistance Authorization Act now before the House would effectively reverse that policy.

Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) introduced an amendment to restrict U.S. funds to any organization or program which supported "coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization," or to any foreign non-governmental organization which "performs or actively promotes abortion as a method of family planning." Citing the Chinese model of forced abortion and the "one-child family" as the most obvious example of this genocidal policy, Smith attempted, under heavy opposition, to reassert previous U.S. policy.

The House agreed instead, by a vote of 234-188, to an amendment put forward by Rep. Peter Kostmayer (D-Penn.) which would grant funds to the United Nations Population Fund on condition that the funds not be made available to the People's Republic of China, or for abortions in any country. Also voted up was an amendment from Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.) which does not restrict funding across the board to organizations involved in abortion, but forbids the use of any funds given by the United States "to perform or actively promote abortion as a method of family planning."

President Bush, so as not to alienate Republican right-to-life supporters, has threatened to veto the bill unless it puts restrictions on funds going

to organizations supporting or performing abortions. The congressional abortion advocates, however, quoted extensively from Bush's own statements, made when he was a congressman, to support their policies.

Baker seeks to mollify China MFN renewal foes

Secretary of State James Baker warned the People's Republic of China on June 12 that there would be "profound consequences" for Chinese-American relations if China sold newly developed ballistic missiles to Syria and Pakistan. At the same time, Baker told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee that the administration remains firmly committed to preserving China's Most Favored Nation trading status for another year.

That decision by George Bush has met with considerable opposition on Capitol Hill, since many legislators feel Bush has been bending over backward to appease Beijing, while the Chinese government continues its bloody repression of the democracy movement. A group of Republican and Democratic senators is seeking concessions from the administration, in exchange for their support for renewal of MFN status.

A letter now being circulated on the Hill for signatures, which was drafted by Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), demands five such administration concessions, the most important being that the U.S. end its opposition to Taiwan's immediate entry into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). In testimony before a House subcommittee on June 12, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger had said that allowing

Taiwan into GATT would infuriate China.

The Baucus letter also suggests that the administration take legal steps to fight China's import barriers; ensure that Chinese products made with prison labor are kept off the U.S. market; block loans to China by multilateral agencies until the country's human rights record improves; and enter into negotiations to curb the spread of ballistic missiles in the Third World. The letter is co-signed by Sen. Bennett Johnston (D-La.) and Sen. Quentin Burdick (D-N.D.), and by Sen. William Roth (R-Del.).

Debate ahead on lifting South Africa sanctions

With South Africa's repeal of its infamous population registration act, one of the foundations of apartheid, the Bush administration is mooting the possibility of lifting economic sanctions against South Africa, which have been in place for five years.

A senior administration official said South Africa has fulfilled four of the five conditions required for the sanctions to be lifted. The only remaining condition is the release of all political prisoners.

However, the Congressional Black Caucus and anti-apartheid lobbies are demanding that sanctions be continued until a new constitution is in place which would give South African blacks the right to vote—not a precondition of the 1986 sanctions legislation.

"We feel it's very important not to lift sanctions now until we're certain the situation in South Africa is irreversible," said Rep. Edolphus Towns (D-N.Y.), chairman of the Black Caucus.

Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), representing the administration viewpoint, said that to demand full voting rights now as a precondition for lifting the sanctions would be "like moving the goalposts." Although not suggesting that sanctions be lifted until the law's requirements are entirely fulfilled, Lugar indicated that South Africa is approaching a situation "where we'll want to evaluate whether they've met the criteria."

Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, leader of South Africa's Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party, arrived in the United States on June 18 for discussions with administration and congressional leaders on lifting the sanctions.

Attack escalates against Project Democracy's NED

The National Endowment for Democracy continues to come under fire from Democratic congressmen as the House debates the Foreign Assistance Authorization Act. In the House debate on the bill on June 13, Rep. Bruce Vento (D-Minn.) pointed to serious "administrative, accounting and politically explosive miscues" which had emerged in the work of the NED, and stressed that "these NED weaknesses must be corrected before full funding and business as usual evolve into major blunders and embarrassment for the United States in our relations with other nations." The NED was involved in the Iran-Contra scandal, and in Lt. Col. Oliver North's activities.

Representative David Obey (D-Wisc.), chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, said that

the NED "is out of control." "I think," said Obey, "they are pursuing their own empire-building agenda rather than pursuing the interests of the United States of America and Uncle Sam. And I frankly doubt that the management problems are going to be corrected unless you have new personnel over there." Obey called for reducing NED funding "significantly."

Earlier, Rep. Paul Kanjorski (D-Penn.) had submitted an amendment which would have sharply curtailed the funding. But Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.) raised a technical objection to a vote on Kanjorski's amendment, and blocked a vote by the full House. Berman's strategy is apparently to get the NED funding approved by the Senate and then in House-Senate conference without risking a damaging debate and vote in the House where the bill could lose.

House moves against India's nuclear program

The House of Representatives voted 242-141 on June 13 to make all economic aid to India and all continued sales of military equipment and technology contingent upon a written certification by the President that India has not developed any new nuclear devices. The bill was sponsored by Democratic Representatives Robert Lagomarsino (R-Calif.) and Charles Wilson (D-Tex.). In debate, Lagomarsino claimed that India's nuclear program is "fueling the regional arms race."

"What troubles me," said Lagomarsino, "and ought to trouble anyone seriously concerned about nuclear proliferation, is India's continued nu-

clear program. Experts estimate that if left unchecked, India could have produced as many as 40 to 60 nuclear weapons by the mid-1990s."

Gonzalez targets Bush's genocidal Gulf policy

In a letter to President Bush on May 30, Rep. Henry Gonzalez (D-Tex.) attacked the President's policy in the Persian Gulf. "The bankrupt nature of your administration's policy in the Middle East is becoming more and more evident," wrote Gonzalez, "as the massive starvation, widespread unrest, and disintegration of the so-called Arab unity . . . are further exacerbating the instability worsened by the Persian Gulf war."

Gonzalez noted that the extended martial law in Kuwait makes clear that the war had nothing to do with democracy, justice, or freeing the oppressed, but "everything to do with greed—spelled o-i-l." Gonzalez pointed to the tens of thousands of children who have died in Iraq in recent months, as well as the spread of cholera, typhoid, and other diseases that were the result of the destruction of Iraqi infrastructure by U.S. and allied bombings.

Gonzalez also commented that the embargo against Iraq has made food and medicine scarce and "has led to an inflationary spiral that has priced many Iraqis completely out of the food market." Asserting that the "most fundamental responsibility we have is to prevent more children from dying," Gonzalez demanded that Bush "immediately call on our allies, and our own resources, to pay for food and medical relief for all those who continue to suffer from the effects of the war—to fund life."